June Decision Due On Kaplan Appeal

By PEARL GONZALEZ

The final outcome of the Joel David Kaplan case will be decided by the Supreme Court of Mexico in June.

These words prompted Víctor Velázquez, the defense attorney for the man convicted of killing Louis Vidal, Jr., in 1961 to ask THE NEWS during an exclusive interview: "I wonder what the American government will do, if the decision is negative, to help Kaplan, an American citizen?"

One of Mexico's most outstanding trial lawyers, Velázquez has remarked that it had been a perversion of Mexican law to convict Kaplan, "since there never was evidence that Vidal had been killed."

He said that Vidal, an American of Puerto Rican and Dominican descent (the godchild of Trujillo) was about 30 years old, dark-eyed, short-nosed and handsome. The man who was identified as Vidal five days later "underwent a fantastic change. He was about 65 years old, had blue eyes and was definitely of Near Eastern origin," Velázquez said.

How did this happen?

Velázquez said it was all the result of a plan to show that Vidal was dead because he had been involved in double-dealing too many people. Vidal had gone to the Hotel Continental Hilton and made it known everywhere he could that he was named Vidal. He even annoyed the laundry room to the point of having them press a pair of pants that had a huge patch on the front. They told him it would be better for him to have a new pair. He went back there three different times making sure they would remember him and the pants.

Later a policeman found the pants and a blood-stained jacket. He found them on a road off the Cuernavaca highway that is widely known as a popular lover's lane, said Velázquez. "The policeman was asked how come he found them in such a crowd of people in the darkness and he replied that a friend had given him a pair of binoculars and he wanted to try them out after work!

"He delivered the pants with nearly 700 pesos in them to show his 'honesty'", continued Velázquez. "The pants also contained several old cancelled checks. Who carries old cancelled checks? There were other things, but no passport. Now what man who goes to a foreign city doesn't have his passport with him? The key from the hotel room that was Vidal's at the Hilton was also found in the pants. Later the big patch in them was identified by the people in the laundry room."

Velázquez said that three day later in Puebla de la Ajusco a body was discovered. It had been covered with a small amount of earth but a foot was sticking out, to make sure it would be seen. "This is the man identified later as Vidal by a frightened Hilton Hotel chambermaid who sees 500 people a day and by a woman who arrived from New York saying she was his wife. Her name was Teresa Carrasquillo and she appeared voluntarily. We later found out she was never married to him and had been earning her living as a prostitute for the past five years. She was taken to see the body and either fainted or pretended to faint and then signed a statement to the effect that it was her husband. "And just imagine," said Velázquez, "the clothing was never even tried on the body. There was such a difference in size, it would have been all too apparent that the clothes did not belong to this dead man."

Velázquez said no one knows what happened to the body because the alleged wife left after she said she was going to stay and see her "husband" avenged, and the body disappeared, too.

The defense attorney pointed out that he has a signed affidavit from Vidal's father in New York that Kaplan came to see him after Vidal disappeared and that he swore that Kaplan had nothing to do with the disappearance of his son.